

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Multi-national engineers help build sustainable community

By Staff Sgt. Michael Beck
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PINE RIDGE INDIAN RESERVATION, S.D. – U.S. Airmen and Denmark Soldiers are working to build a solar panel structure to help create a sustainable community for area residents of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation June 6-20.

The structure is being built at the Thunder Valley Community Development Center near Porcupine by engineers of the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing, of Sioux Falls, and the Denmark Army as a part of the Golden Coyote training exercise.

"As we learn more about the Thunder Valley community project and their vision for a sustainable community for tribal members, we are excited to be a part of this building project," said Maj. Jody Page, operations officer for the 114th's Civil Engineer Squadron.

Engineers from the two groups are working on the project daily, doing site preparation, pouring footings and constructing a classroom.

"We average 10 to 12 people a day working on the project," said Maj. Todd Mergen, engineer projects officer for the 114th CES. "We have some equipment operators doing site work, and our engineers are building a 1,760 square-foot, covered outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure."

Nick Tilson, the executive director of Thunder Valley, reached out to the state Office of Tribal Relations to make this project become a reality, said Andrew Iron Shell, community engagement coordinator.

"That is how we connected with the National Guard," said Iron Shell. "It's great having this support to bring this vision to life."

The project not only benefits local community members but the engineers as well.

"Working with organizations like this allows us to complete our training goals but also provide a benefit to Thunder Valley," said Page.

This solar panel structure will be connected between two buildings, which will provide power and also serve as a canopy for an outdoor classroom.

"I teach two academic and one hands-on class in workforce development and sustainable construction," said Lenny Lone Hill, construction coordinator and teacher for the community. "We are trying to create a self-help model, in which future homeowners help build their own houses, reducing costs to them and giving them instant equity."

Before the vision of Thunder Valley is complete, the community will become self-sustainable and will include: houses, retail spaces, community gardens, educational facilities, and an emergency youth shelter.

A groundbreaking ceremony for these future projects is scheduled to take place at the Thunder Valley Community Development Center on June 22 at 10 a.m.

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High-resolution photos are available upon request or at www.flickr.com/photo/southdakotationalguard



150610-Z-BB320-016: A Denmark Army engineer and the South Dakota Air National Guard's Master Sgt. Lance Dyer, NCO in charge, of the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, of Sioux Falls, S.D., work together to build an outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure at the Thunder Valley Community Development Center near Porcupine on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., June 10, 2015. This is one of many construction projects conducted during the 31st Golden Coyote training exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck/Released)



150610-Z-BB320-021: Denmark Army engineer, Brig. Gen. Keld Christensen, and Maj. Todd Mergen, engineer projects officer of the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, of Sioux Falls, S.D., look over an outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure built by Denmark and South Dakota Air National Guard engineers at the Thunder Valley Community Development Center near Porcupine on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., June 10, 2015. This is one of many construction projects conducted during the 31st Golden Coyote training exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck/Released)



150610-Z-BB320-031: The South Dakota Air National Guard's Staff Sgt. Andrew Miller, a generator mechanic with the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, of Sioux Falls, S.D., helps build an outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure built by Air National Guard and Denmark Army engineers at the Thunder Valley Community Development Center near Porcupine on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., June 10, 2015. This is one of many construction projects conducted during the 31st Golden Coyote training exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck/Released)



150610-Z-BB320-066: The South Dakota Air National Guard's Master Sgt. Lance Dyer, NCO in charge, of the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, of Sioux Falls, S.D., talks with Lenny Lone Hill, construction coordinator for Thunder Valley Community Development Center near Porcupine on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., June 10, 2015. Air National Guard and Denmark Army engineers are working to build an outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure as part of a larger construction project that will bring a sustainable community to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This is one of many construction projects conducted during the 31st Golden Coyote training exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck/Released)



150610-Z-BB320-021: Visiting Denmark Army engineer dignitaries look over an outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure being built by Denmark and South Dakota Air National Guard engineers at the Thunder Valley Community Development Center near Porcupine on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, S.D., June 10, 2015. Construction of the outdoor classroom and solar panel support structure is part of a larger construction project that will bring a sustainable community to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This is one of many construction projects conducted during the Golden Coyote training exercise. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Michael Beck/Released)

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